



# Senator Bob Oke's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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**January 28, 2005**

## **First bill to pass Senate prohibits the giving away of tobacco products**

On January 26, the Senate approved a bill to stop the giving away of cigarettes and chewing tobacco at fairs, concerts and rodeos. Cigarette manufacturers distribute free samples as a marketing technique. Tobacco companies know that if people start smoking when they are young, they will have customers for a long time. Most people who smoke started before age 18. Washington has seen a 25-fold increase in sampling events in the last eight years. While it is illegal to give such products to youths under age 18, these events are impossible to monitor. There are hundreds of sampling events every year and the Liquor Control Board is only able to police a few. **(Senate Bill 5048, sponsored by Sen. Oke)**

## **Election Challenge Update**

The next session of the Chelan County Superior Court to hear issues pertaining to the Republican Party challenge to the governor's election is February 4. On Friday, January 21, the Republican Party reached beyond the court and filed its challenge to the election with the Legislature as an "insurance policy."

## **Election Reform Update – New Bills Filed**

**Senate Bill 5400** – This measure requires voters to show proof of registration and photo ID when voting at the polls.

**Senate Bill 5395** – This measure requires that all electronic vote devices produce a machine-countable paper record for each vote cast.

**Senate Bill 5399** – This measure requires county elections officials to randomly investigate the record of all registered voters to make corrections regarding persons who are deceased or whose residence differs from that on the official statewide voter registration list.

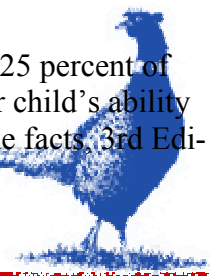
**Senate Bill 5499** - This comprehensive measure addresses training for election workers; formal reviews of election-related policies and procedures; voter verification; uniform ballots; the appearance of provisional ballots and penalties for voter fraud.

**Senate Bill 5525** – This measure requires provisional ballots be printed on color paper to distinguish them from regular ballots so they can be retrieved from electronic vote-counting machines should they be put into the machines by accident before the voter's qualifications are verified. **(Sponsored by Sen. Oke)**

**Senate Bill 5526** – Provisional ballots are required by the federal Help America Vote Act. This measure creates state law on provisional ballots so they can be regulated. **(Sponsored by Sen. Oke)**

## **Budget Tidbits...just the facts**

Did you know nearly 7,000 students in our two- and four-year institutions have more than 125 percent of the credits needed to graduate? Find out why this is important to our state's budget and your child's ability to get into a public university. Go to [www.src.wa.gov](http://www.src.wa.gov) and click on "Budget Tidbits...just the facts, 3rd Edition."



**Bill to exempt state ferry fuel from state taxes will save riders money**

**Senate Bill 5402 (sponsored by Sen. Oke)** exempts fuel used to operate state ferries from state excise taxes. The state's ferry system has been hit hard by rising fuel prices and this additional cost will impact fares. Exempting ferry fuel from state excise taxes will reduce fare increases.

**Bipartisan measure provides for annual inflation adjustment in law to help senior citizens and persons retired on disability qualify for property tax exemptions**

Washington voters approved an amendment to the Washington State Constitution many years ago to allow the state to help senior citizens stay in their homes by allowing those with low incomes to qualify for property taxes exemptions. The Legislature has adjusted the level of qualifying income many times over the years. **Senate Bill 5361** directs the state Department of Revenue to annually increase that qualifying income level to reflect the increased cost of living.

**Bill gives owners of small utility trailers a break**

When the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax was repealed, sections of law that provided for a minimal license fee for small utility trailers was repealed as well. Prior to this, the annual license fee for small utility trailers was \$4.50; the annual renewal fee was \$3.25. Under the repeal, the fee became the flat \$30 fee paid on passenger cars and personal trucks. **Senate Bill 5162, co-sponsored by Sen. Oke**, restores the minimal licensing fee for small utility trailers.

**Bill with strong bipartisan sponsorship creates permanent legislative committee on veterans and active duty military issues**

In 2001, a joint legislative committee was created to study issues of concern to veterans, active duty military personnel, National Guard members and reservists and their families in Washington State. **Senate Bill 5221 co-sponsored by Sen. Oke**, makes this body permanent in an effort to better serve the needs of men, women and children in Washington's large military community.

**Senate honors the men and women who serve in the Washington National Guard**

Members of Washington's National Guard are everyday heroes from helping people in natural disasters to defending the freedom to self-govern in Iraq. In many ways they put their lives on the line to save others. During a touching ceremony in the Senate on January 26, the members of our state's Guard were thanked and honored. A Washington State flag that had been flying over Camp Anaconda, the largest support base in Iraq, will hang in the Senate Chambers until all Washington National Guard members have returned from Iraq.

**Republican memorial asks Congress to protect firearms industry from lawsuits when guns are misused**

**Senate Joint Memorial 8005, co-sponsored by Sen. Oke**, calls upon Congress to protect firearms and ammunition manufacturers from being liable for harm caused by those who criminally or unlawfully misuse firearms. This bill in Congress has strong bipartisan support.

**Second Amendment under attack, several gun control bills heard in Senate Judiciary Committee**

Second Amendment supporters flooded one hearing room and spilled into another on January 25 when the Senate Judiciary Committee heard a series of gun control measures. Among the bills being considered this session are a state version of the expired federal ban on assault weapons; waiting periods and background checks for gun shows; and a re-run of an overwhelmingly defeated initiative imposing criminal penalties for lack of firearms safety. These measures include:

- **Senate Bill 5344** – prohibiting firearms in the Legislative Building
  - **Senate Bill 5593** – banning .50 caliber BMG rifles
  - **Senate Bill 5343** – requiring background checks and waiting periods for all guns purchased at gun shows
  - **Senate Bill 5342** – imposing criminal liability on adults who leave firearms accessible to minors (This measure is similar to I-676, requiring trigger locks and gun safety licenses, which was defeated in all 39 Washington counties in 1997.)
- Senate Bill 5475** – banning assault weapons

**Making Washington safer from terrorists acts**

Under the federal Patriot Act, championed by President Bush, persons who drive hazardous materials through Washington and other states must now undergo a criminal background check that includes fingerprinting and immigration checks starting January 31. A Republican-sponsored measure in the Senate also requires that people applying for driver's licenses in Washington must present proof that they are legally in the United States (**Senate Bill 5313**). Several of the terrorists involved in the 9-11 tragedy had driver's licenses, but were in the country illegally.

**Bill would permit local referendums on land use decisions by Growth Management Act hearings boards**

Many residents in rural areas dislike it when a growth management hearings board overturns land use plans made by county legislative authorities. Currently, citizens have no way to undo a hearings board directive. Under **Senate Bill 5312**, if voters in a county approve a referendum on a growth management measure, then the measure as passed by the county commission or council becomes effective. If voters defeat such a referendum, then the GMA hearings board decision on the measure goes into effect.

**Hanford cleanup initiative inadvertently threatens cancer treatment**

Last November, state voters approved I-297, a measure thought by many as a way to prevent Washington from receiving new radioactive waste at Hanford until the existing problems with waste have been cleaned up. However, the Tri-Cities is not only home to Hanford, it is home to many companies that produce radioactive isotopes used for treating prostate and other types of cancer -- a process that produces radioactive waste. The provisions of I-297 may force these companies out of Washington. **Senate Bill 5445** seeks to amend I-297 so that cancer treatment waste from Washington companies is exempt.

**No Child Left Behind Act: President Bush wins approval of new education loan forgiveness levels for math, science and special education teachers**

The new loan forgiveness level is \$17,500, a dramatic increase of \$12,500 above the previous loan limits and is meant to ease the shortage of teachers in key subject areas. It is available to math, science and special education teachers who have taught in Title I schools for five years and is also available to new borrowers as an incentive for prospective teachers to teach in subjects and schools that have difficulty hiring highly qualified candidates. Title I schools are those schools that are above a school district's average level of poverty.

*Legislative toll free hotline: 1-800-562-6000*

*TTY: 1-800-635-9993*

*Senate Republican Web site: [www.src.wa.gov](http://www.src.wa.gov)*

*Legislature's Web site: <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature>*